

A newsletter from the Borough Councillors for the Test Valley Borough Ward of Mid-Test

Cllrs Alison Johnston, Ian Jeffrey, and Tony Ward

More organisations set to benefit as Test Valley Borough Council's Cost of Living Grant scheme increases to £100,000

The Cost-of-Living Grant scheme, set up by Test Valley Borough Council, has doubled its budget.

Originally launched with £50,000, the local authority now has an additional £50,000 to distribute to groups, not-for-profit organisations and charities to help residents with the rising cost of living.

Since being set up at the end of September, nearly £35,000 has been awarded to 29 organisations.

This includes Portway Infant and Junior Schools who received £1,000 each to provide families with essentials such as warm clothing and bedding and the Community Life Centre in North Baddesley who got just over £950 to create a warm welcome hub with free activities, refreshments, internet access and support.

Meanwhile, Broughton Parish Council got some money to provide a warm space with free food, drink and fun games and activities for all ages, Balksbury Infant and Junior Schools each got £1,000 to provide breakfast packages for families and Roman Way Primary School got the same amount to help give out warm bedding and clothing during Winter.

There is now just over £65,000 left in the pot. Charities, not-for-profit and voluntary organisations, parish and town councils, and schools can still apply for a share of the money to help them support people who may be struggling financially with the increase to bills and general cost of living.

TVBC has also created a Cost of Living Support Hub at www.testvalley.gov.uk/costoflivingsupport. It provides useful information and signposts people to agencies and groups which offer a range of help, from local food banks and warm welcome spaces to financial advice.

The URL to direct organisations to apply is: www.testvalley.gov.uk/costoflivinggrantscheme



Public asked for their feedback on public space designs as Andover regen plans take shape

Test Valley Borough Council has today launched a consultation for feedback on designs that will guide the future redevelopment of Andover town centre, covering everything from street furniture to the use of spaces for events.

The Andover Public Realm Design Guide will help ensure that any development in the town is carried out to a high standard and will be used to determine whether to grant permission for planning applications.

It looks at how people should move through the town, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, traffic calming measures, event spaces, street furniture, building materials, and the integration of facilities such as electric vehicle charging points.

The document has been produced by NEW Masterplanning, who also created the masterplan for the redevelopment of the town centre.

The design guide is available at www.testvalley.gov.uk/andoverpublicrealmspd and people have until 12 noon on 3 February to submit their feedback.

Once the consultation has closed, NEW Masterplanning and TVBC will review the feedback and make any changes to the designs before putting the document forward for formal adoption.

The council is also waiting to hear the outcome of its bid for £18.5M from the government's Levelling Up Fund to accelerate delivery of the masterplan.

If successful, the money will be used to deliver a stunning riverside park along Western Avenue, transform the riverside footpath south of Bridge Street, demolish the former magistrates' court building, and create a spectacular new cultural hub in the town centre which would include the relocation of The Lights theatre.



Children's play area in Andover set to get £350,000 renovation

A children's play area in Andover is set to undergo a major £350,000 renovation, after Test Valley Borough Council's (TVBC) cabinet approved funding for the project yesterday (Wednesday 7 December).

Vigo Road Recreation Ground will see its play area refurbished, after the council undertook a consultation on the community's aspirations for the wider space last year.

TVBC consulted with local schools, clubs, community groups and disability forums to help form a plan to improve the space. More than 600 people responded, with many saying that the play area was the main reason they visited the site.

Multiple comments were made about the play area needing to be updated to include a wider variety of new equipment with the addition of water play.

Now that TVBC has allocated the funding for the work, it plans to undertake further consultation with the community over the next year to begin to develop a concept for the space before proceeding with tendering and then construction.

It's hoped the site will be open to the public in Spring 2024.



Military Wives Choir entertain Test Valley Mayor during charity's Christmas concert

The Mayor of Test Valley Borough Council, Cllr Alan Dowden, had a special evening listening to the Middle Wallop and Andover Military Wives Choir at a local charity's Christmas concert.

The Mayor, alongside the Mayoress Cllr Celia Dowden, visited St Mary's Church for Enham

Trust's event.

The choir performed several Christmas songs and carols for guests, all to raise money for the charity.

Stories and poems were also performed during the festive themed evening

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

As part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda three funding streams were made available, the high profile Levelling Up Fund, to which the Council submitted a bid for Andover Town Centre, a rural England prosperity fund; and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The aim of the UKSPF scheme is to support the UK government's Levelling Up commitment through three investment priorities of (a) Communities and place; (b) Supporting local business; and (c) People and skills.

A conditional financial sum was awarded to the Council of £1M over the next three years. The funding was conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory projects that met these priorities. These were agreed by Cabinet in September 2022. The projects were:-

1. a) A contribution of £240,000 towards extending the teaching facilities within the Andover College campus to help deliver T-Level 3 courses in Construction Skills, Bricklaying and Carpentry.
2. b) Working with health sector colleagues a contribution of £280,000 to deliver a new Health Hub within the Chantry Centre, Andover. Whilst providing a facility in the short and medium term the creation of a health hub will also help inform any future accommodation requirements as part of the longer term town centre regeneration. The hub will be complemented by the creation of outreach worker posts, which will be part funded by a £110,000 contribution. Together they will help to address the wider determinants of poor health through early intervention and prevention within the most deprived communities in the Borough.
3. c) Provide a £100,000 fund for community energy efficiency and decarbonisation projects across the Borough.
4. d) Provide a £140,000 budget to support technological, process and nature[1]based innovation within our local rural land based businesses to enable measures to be introduced that reduce their carbon footprint.
5. e) Supporting the University of Southampton Science Park's Catalyst Programme in conjunction with the University of Southampton Science Park and Hampshire County Council. The £30,000 grant to the programme will help provide innovation led business with commercial expertise and experience through mentoring and peer support with world class business leaders.
6. f) A £100,000 fund to help deliver those projects identified by Romsey Future which help improve the public realm, deliver environmental and infrastructure improvements and increase footfall and visitors numbers to the town.

2022/23 Councillor Community Grant scheme - Final deadline is fast approaching!

The Councillor Community Grant Scheme closes for application at 23:00 on Wednesday 22nd March 2023.

This is the fourth and final year of the current funding cycle, which means that all unallocated ward budgets will be lost, as unlike in previous years, the unspent grant funding cannot be rolled over into the new financial year.

We are keen to award every single penny of our ward budget to the many wonderful new and existing activities, projects, groups and organisations in Mid Test.

The link for those wishing to make an application in our ward: www.testvalley.gov.uk/CCG

The 2023/24 Councillor Community Grant Scheme will re-open with replenished budgets shortly after the outcomes of the May 2023 Elections.

Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2022 draft published

Test Valley Borough Council has published its draft Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2022 and is inviting the public to comment until Friday 3 February 2023.

The Andover Town Centre Public Realm Design Guide is aimed at those who either develop, improve, or alter the public streets and spaces in Andover Town Centre. The Design Guide is concerned with issues such as movement, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, traffic calming measures, use of space for events, the introduction of green and blue spaces, street furniture, materials, integration of facilities such as EV charging points etc.

Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2022

A303 and A34 Litter Picking



From Monday 9 January, the council's contractor Forest Traffic Services Ltd, will commence clearing the litter from the borough's A303 and A34 verges, laybys and slip roads.

Mobile traffic management will be deployed to ensure that working on verges and slip roads is safe. The work takes place at this time of year as the vegetation has died back, allowing for easier retrieval of litter. At the same time, the Environmental Service will commence its rural road litter picking programme.

Annual Leaf Clearance

The council's eight-week annual leaf clearance project has just been completed and once again, it has proved very successful with around 400 tonnes of leaves collected.

Bulky Waste Collection Service Changes

From the 1 January 2023, the council must segregate any waste domestic upholstered seating it collects, as it may contain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

This requirement has meant that the council's bulky waste collection service has had to change. From this date, non-POPs collections (all the other items we collect as part of the bulky waste collection service) will take place on a Monday or Tuesday, depending where the customer lives. Each Wednesday will be the council's POPs collection day - for the collection of any sofas, sofa beds, armchairs, kitchen or dining room chairs, stools or footstalls, home office chairs, futons, beanbags and floor or sofa cushions.

The charging structure for the bulky waste collection service will not change immediately, but it will be reviewed, as some customers will receive two collections if they have a mix of POPs and non-POPs items and also the council now has to travel further to dispose of POPs items.

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